

IN THE SPECIFICATION:

Please amend the paragraph beginning at line 22 of page 7 in the specification, which was previously amended in the Amendment dated September 22, 2002, as follows:

The shape of a boat serving as a holding tool will be described with reference to Figs. 3 and 4. Fig. 3 shows a wafer boat (~~i.e., wafer boat 8~~) 7 applied to this embodiment. Four columns 11 symmetrically stand on a ring-shaped bottom plate 10. A ring-shaped top plate 12 is fixed on the upper ends of the columns 11. Each column 11 has a circular section. A number of wafer loading grooves 13 are formed in the vertical direction at a predetermined pitch in each column 11 on a side opposing the central axis of the wafer boat ~~[[8]]~~ 7. Wafers are inserted into the grooves 13 of the four columns 11 and supported by a wafer boat ~~[[8]]~~ 7 at the four groove portions.